

VZCZCXRO3937

OO RUEHBZ RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO

DE RUEHAN #0004 0031342

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

O 031342Z JAN 08

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0828

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0948

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000004

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

ADDIS FOR AMBASSADOR COURVILLE

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/FO, INR/AA, AND DRL

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF/E RMEDRANO

PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CN](#)

SUBJECT: DUELING NEW YEARS ADDRESSES IN COMOROS

REF: A) ANTANANARIVO 1252 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) In his annual New Year's Eve speech addressing the nation, Union President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi called the crisis on Anjouan one of the defining events of 2007. However, he reassured the people, "the liberation of Anjouan" is due in early 2008; his next speech will announce the day the National Army will leave for Anjouan. "The list of soldiers who will go is ready. We will announce the day, so the Anjouanese population can participate in this liberation in order to minimize the damage." Outlining a brighter future on the economic front, Sambi explained he has been received by many foreign heads of state interested in signing projects including the construction of ports on all three islands for a modern ferryboat system, the opening of two to four new banks, the construction of a large port in Moroni, housing construction, and geothermal energy studies. Perhaps referring to ongoing corruption trials surrounding the Indian/Iranian company NICOM, and/or the actions of Colonel Mohamed Bacar, he also warned citizens that no one is above the law.

¶2. (U) One hour later, renegade leader of Anjouan Colonel Mohamed Bacar opened his melodramatic address to the island with the words, "We live in a country where the national army is still discussing whether it should open fire on the same people it is charged with defending." Calling the island's development his first priority (although his speech was devoid of any mention of economic progress, past or future) and the protection of the Anjouanese his first obligation, he said no concessions to the Union Government are possible. "I commit myself personally to re-don my military uniform to face the invading mercenaries."

¶3. (SBU) Despite escalating tensions, Foreign Minister Jaffar told journalists that, although a military option against Bacar is not off the table, the Union Government does not want war in Anjouan. Chief of the Army Salimou told an Embassy representative that barring any unforeseen crisis, the Union Government will wait until African Union (AU) sanctions expire January 25 before taking any action. In the meantime, National Army soldiers were seen exercising on a beach near Moroni December 30, under the observation of President Sambi.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: While Salimou insists the invasion of Anjouan is not a question of "whether" but "when," Post notes the National Army woefully lacks the resources to carry out a successful attack. Despite a donation of boats from Morocco, Salimou said they do not have enough boats to carry out the attack and are still asking around for helicopters. An AU meeting is expected in Addis Ababa January 21, where the apparently limited effectiveness of sanctions against Anjouan will be discussed. It seems the Union Government is running out of hope the AU can resolve the problem diplomatically.

END COMMENT.

